

September 8, 2004

Red Pines Project
Nez Perce National Forest
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I saw the legal notice requesting comments on the **Red Pines DEIS** in the Lewiston Morning Tribune on August 27, 2004. On August 25, 2004, I received a copy of the DEIS under a "Dear Planning Participant" cover letter. Please file these comments in the NEPA project file.

This is the second timber sale NEPA document I have read in less than a month that was written by a Nez Perce National Forest unit. They both have the same flaw. They both betray the public.

Why? They both try to hide the **real** Purpose and Need of the project.

Why would the Forest Service do this? The Forest Service has the perception that logging and road construction on public land is unpopular with the public. This is more than a perception ... its true. Many people living in a rural community like Grangeville prefer their public forests in a wild condition.

The Nez Perce Forest should let the public's desires for their public lands guide their projects. On the Nez Perce this isn't the case. I know, I worked there.

Some staff members on the Nez Perce Forest are so caught up in their obsession to sell timber and make important people happy, they resort to the use of unethical tactics with the public such as hiding the Purpose and Need of a project.

I feel bad for the new Deputy Forest Supervisor. Steve Williams is a good man and does not deserve to have such unethical staff members working for him. None of the Rangers should even contemplate signing the RODs or DNs that I read; yet quite obviously they are planning to do just that.

The following are the issues I have identified with the Red Pines DEIS.

Issue #1 The Purpose and Need is Written Incorrectly

The Purpose and Need of the project is shown on page I-2 in the DEIS.

Often times, readers of NEPA documents have great trouble differentiating the difference between the "purpose" of a project and the "need" for a project. Webster defines both these words as follows:

purpose: **1.** the object for which anything is done. **2.** an intended or desired result; end or aim.

need: **1.** a case or instance in which some necessity or want exists; a requirement. **2.** urgent want.

Webster shows these 2 words are nearly synonymous. It is unfortunate that the NEPA uses the 2 words Purpose and Need without defining the subtle differences. What the NEPA intended was for the P&N to be used as a single phrase to simply tell the reader why the project is being proposed.

On page I-2 the **purpose** of the project and the **need** for the project are presented to the reader separately. The 6 items listed under "need" are really proposed actions that will help to meet the project goals listed under purpose.

Response 3-1. Purpose and Need.

We agree the definition of the term "purpose and need" in this document is from the National Environmental Policy Act (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508).

There will always be those Forest Service employees who will say "since the 40 CFRs say there must be a 'purpose' and a 'need', then the purpose and need must be different." Nothing could be farther from the truth.

In the Red Pines DEIS the Purpose and the Need were addressed separately, and this causes great confusion for the reader.

In 40 CFR § 1502.13 - Purpose and need, it states:

"The statement shall briefly specify the underlying purpose and need to which the agency is responding in proposing the alternatives including the proposed action."

The operative word here is "briefly".

Issue #2 I am Unable to Determine Why the Project is being Proposed. This is Proof that the Purpose and Need is Fatally Flawed

After reading the Red Pines Purpose and Need, I have yet to determine what the **real, number one, primary** Purpose and Need is. I can only determine that the Purpose and Need is some undefined combination of the 3 items listed below.

- 1) Treat existing and potential fuel loads in order to reduce the effects of potential large-scale wildfire.
- 2) Improve the safety and effectiveness of firefighters in fire suppression activities.
- 3) Contribute to the economic and social well being of residents and visitors within (the) proximity to the project area.

I can read this over and over again and still wonder "what is it."

Many times a proposed action that will help to accomplish the goal of the P&N will have secondary ecological and social benefits. A common mistake in doing NEPA documentation is to list these secondary benefits as parts of a P&N with multiple goals.

The courts have not looked kindly on this, and have ruled for the plaintiffs many times.

I have the following questions and responses to each of the 3 P&Ns that are listed in the DEIS:

1) Treat the fuel loads where? Is this project intended to protect people living in the urban interface, or does it defy the Chief's wishes to "let fire play its natural role in the forest" by reducing fuels in the backcountry?

2) What immediately comes to mind is what the Forest Service is saying on a national basis.

They are saying that fire suppression activities cost too much and will be reduced in the backcountry away from any urban interface locations.

Does part #2 of your P&N mean that the **real P&N** for the Red Pines project is to interrupt the natural fire cycle everywhere? If it does, then this is also inconsistent with the Chief's wishes to let fire play its natural role in the forest. If it is, then you can bet money that I will appeal.

3) Economic and social well being, community stability, and jobs are all Forest Service euphemisms for getting the cut out without ever having to tell the general public the truth. If P&N, section #3 is used as even a partial reason for timber harvest, the Forest Service must have data to back up their claim. Their data must show:

Response 3-2 Proposed Action, Purpose and Need. Fuels

The purpose of the project is to reduce fuel loadings in strategic areas within the project area to reduce the potential of large high intensity wildfires and thus the adverse effects of such fires that may occur within the project area. The fuel loading is increasing with the Mountain Pine Beetle epidemic that is occurring within the project area. By implementing fuels reductions in these areas we will create some spatial fragmentation of the areas which will result in reduce fire behavior and additionally provide areas for suppression resources to safely and effectively implement suppression strategies for wildfires occurring within the project area.

Response 3-3 Mgt

Please refer to Section 1.5 of the FEIS.

See Section 1.5.1 of the FEIS regarding fuel loading and removal of dead and dying trees. Treatments are proposed within the forested area of Red River watershed. This area happens to be adjacent to the urban interface area of Elk City..

See Section 1.5.2 of the FEIS that clarifies Part #2 of the purpose and need, reduce timber stand densities.

Economic and social well being of community stability and jobs is not part of the purpose and need, see Section 1.5 of the FEIS.

- Current forest products related employment, total payroll, and total payroll percentage of the total money that passes through the community.
- The trends over time in the above figures (i.e. is the forest products related employment and total payroll going up or down).
- How will the Red Pines proposed action affect the 2 items above? Will Red Pines really "contribute to the economic and social well being of residents and visitors within (the) proximity to the project area." How?

Last, please explain how the Red Pines project will "contribute to the economic and social well being of ... visitors within (the) proximity to the project area."

To summarize this issue section, I would strongly advise you to change the DEIS in the following ways:

- 1) Determine what your primary goal of the Red Pines project is and write it up as a single Purpose and Need.
- 2) Place the secondary benefits of initiating the proposed actions which will achieve the P&N in the direct and indirect effects section of the DEIS where they belong.

Issue #3 I find it Very Unfortunate that you are Proposing such a Large-Scale Type Change in the Forest When lodgepole pine forests mature, they get bugs and pathogens, and the trees die. Then they burn. This is the life cycle of lodgepole pine. With the exception of fuel reduction work involving twigs, brush and very small tree removal, nothing will prevent this lodgepole pine forest from doing what it has done for millions of years. For that matter, nobody with any ecological background at all would propose doing this anyway. Lodgepole pine has evolved to require fire to pop the seeds and reforest itself. This is a magnificent and unique adaptation.

The environmental effects of the Red Pines project on the vegetation resource of the area (mostly negative) are shown on pages III-136 to III-158.

I know that there are wildlife species that prefer and even depend on mature lodgepole pine habitat. After looking in the wildlife effects section of the EIS, I am unable to find this discussion. It would appear that whoever wrote the wildlife effects section was careful not to include any negative effects associated with the action alternatives.

Issue #4 I find The Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects of the Red Pines Project on the Soils Resource are Tragic

The environmental effects of the Red Pines project on the soils resource of the area (mostly negative) are shown on pages III-10 to III-38. Had the "land manager" closely read this section and cared about maintaining the ecological health of the area, this project would never had made it to this very expensive 400 page DEIS stage.

The soils in the project area are already in such poor shape, they don't even make the Forest Plan minimum standards. The reason they are in such poor shape is past tractor logging. Now more tractor logging is proposed with the Red Pines project.

The soils effects analysis shows that Red Pines will cause the soils to be in even worse shape. In fact, they are expected to be so poor, that the red Pines project is proposing a Forest Plan amendment to allow the Forest Service to hammer the soils resource once again. What can I say? Perhaps I should cry.

Response 3-4 Mgt, veg.
Comment acknowledged.

Response 3-5 Veg
See Environmental Effects discussion (DEIS III-145 to III-159). While the EIS states that the vegetation resource has been altered in the Red Pines Analysis area, beneficial effects to vegetation, including enhanced health, vigor, and increased growth could be expected as the result of vegetation treatments, as well as restoration of ponderosa pine and western larch in areas where they had been removed in the past (DEIS III-145, Environmental Effects, paragraphs 3-5). Also see Indirect Effects discussion, DEIS III-145 (Alternatives B, C, and D (paragraph 4) and FEIS Section 3.9.6.

Response 3-6 Wildlife
Literature is notoriously void in describing wildlife use in lodgepole pine forests. In response to your comment, a literature search was conducted. Research conducted by Stone (1995) was located and summarized in the text of the FEIS. In addition, the FEIS was supplemented with information contained in the Forest Service Fire Effects System (http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/pinconl/management_considerations.html) that contained a link between wildlife and lodgepole pine forests.

Response 3-7 Soils

The degree and scale of soil impacts in the watershed have prompted the extensive soil restoration activities proposed, particularly in Alternative E. The choice of logging systems is a result of economics, terrain, silvicultural system, and resource values. Because ground based logging and slash treatments were chosen, extensive design and mitigation are required to protect soil resources. See Tables II-2 and II-3. Monitoring is also required (Appendix I) that would identify needed changes to activities to protect soil resources, during implementation, or to ensure that necessary restoration is completed before leaving the activity area.

Issue #5 I find The Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects of the Red Pines Project on the Fisheries Resource are also Tragic

The environmental effects of the Red Pines project on the fisheries resource of the area (mostly negative) are shown on pages III-69 to III-107. Had the "land manager" closely read this section and cared about maintaining the ecological health of the area, this project would never had made it to this very expensive 400 page DEIS stage.

On page III-76 the environmental consequences of the Red Pines project are listed. With the exception of large woody debris recruitment, action alternatives B, C, and D all are negative. The DEIS states that alternatives B, C, and D would result in:

- highest risks to fish habitat
- short-term increase in sediment production
- short-term adverse effects to trout and salmon and their habitats

I find it incredible that the Forest Service knows these fish are ESA listed yet, they still forge ahead with their logging project.

Just this one issue makes the Forest Service's willingness to proceed with Red Pines an example of very poor land management. It shows me that sleazy politics governs Forest Service land management decisions now.

Issue #6 In Light of the Red Pines Predicted Effects to Rare Plants, Proceeding with the Project is Criminal

The environmental effects of the Red Pines project on the rare plants of the area (mostly negative) are shown on pages III-159 to III-185. Had the "land manager" closely read this section and cared about maintaining the ecological health of the area, this project would never had made it to this very expensive 400 page DEIS stage.

On page III-60 under **CONCLUSIONS**, there is a short section on environmental consequences. I did not have time to read every write-up so I was glad to see this summary. However, it was not what I expected.

It informed the reader that 3 sensitive plants are known to occur within proposed fuels treatment units. It also said:

"Impacts of management activities on sensitive plant species and habitat, range from detrimental to beneficial depending upon individual species biology and response."

This sentence was worthless and told me nothing. I would strongly suggest replacing this sentence with a 3-column table. The first column would contain the name of each plant. The second column would describe the plant status (i.e. sensitive, threatened, or endangered). Column three would briefly describe the environmental effects of Red Pined on the plant and refer the reader to another page where there is a more detailed discussion.

Issue #7 I have been Reading Proposed Actions for over 30 Years and I cannot ever Remember ever Reading one that was so Consciously Disingenuous and Deceptive

The legal notice included the following activities that are part of the red Pines Project. The activities are shown in the order they appear in the legal notice. In most writing convention where lists are used, the item at the top of this list is the most important.

- 1) watershed improvements activities,
- 2) road decommissioning,
- 3) road maintenance,
- 4) and temporary road construction,
- 5) conversion of road to trail,
- 6) **timber harvest**,
- 7) prescribed burning,
- 8) noxious and exotic plant species control,
- 9) stream stabilization, and 10) soil restoration.

Response 3-8 Fish/Aquatics

Effects to fish habitat are described in the Fisheries section of the FEIS. Implementation of the action alternatives would include a substantial amount of watershed restoration activities. These activities would result in long-term reductions in sediment yield, reduced risks associated with numerous road/stream crossings, improved fish passage, increases in the number and quality of pools, increases in large woody debris, and improvement in riparian condition in many areas of the watershed. These effects are generally considered beneficial to fisheries resources.

Alternative E was developed to provide an alternative that responds to issues associated with water quality, fisheries, and upward trend.

We acknowledge the beneficial effects of the action alternatives were not well-summarized in the DEIS and have provided a better summary in the FEIS in Section 3.1.4.2.

Response 3-9 Veg, TES PLANTS

Rather than place a table in the summary statements, the passage quoted in Issue #6 can be modified to direct the reader to where such a table exists in the section on Existing Condition section of sensitive species (Section 3.10.5.1 of the FEIS) in Chapter 3. Specific discussions of species response follow this effects summary table. The modified passage will be similar to the following:

"Impacts of management activities on sensitive plant species and habitat range from detrimental to beneficial depending upon individual species biology and response. Table III-45 in the Rare Plants section of Chapter 3 summarizes impacts to the individual plant species associated with this project."

Response 3-10 Management; proposed action.

The legal notice provided information to the public comments to gather comments about the proposed action. The order of the proposed activities was not intended to be deceptive.

Any thinking human being would look at this list and conclude that the primary emphasis for the Red Pines project is to improve watershed conditions. Of course, we all know that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Timber harvest is so far down the list it is understood by many members of the public to mean "oh by the way, while we are doing all the white hat activities in the Red Pines area, we will also cut a few trees."

In the DEIS, there is really not definitive listing of the proposed action. In the table of contents, the reader is told to see page I-2 for the proposed action. Under the bold section **PROPOSED ACTION**, the reader is directed to go to map 2 where "the proposed activities are displayed fully." Map 2 shows nothing but the project area broken into the following activities:

- Clearcut or Clearcut w/Reserves
- Precommercial Thin
- Shelterwood or Irregular Shelterwood
- Proposed Road Decommissioning
- Proposed Temp. Road Construction
- Proposed Road Reconditioning

When these 6 items are compared to the proposed actions in the legal notice, my response is **WHAT?**

In the legal notice, the Forest Service clearly portrays the need to improve watershed conditions as the primary Red Pines activity. If watershed improvement is the primary activity then:

- 1) Why do all of the action alternatives vary by the amount of timber logged?
- 2) Why do the vast majority of hydrologists and fisheries biologists agree that the project will likely harm federally protected steelhead and bull trout and reduce water quality significantly? Your own biologists are telling you this, yet you stubbornly forge ahead!

In most timber sale NEPS documents, the proposed action is portrayed as a table. Whenever there is harvest, the acres are shown by silvicultural prescription. Whenever there is any road work, the miles are shown by the type of road work. In this DEIS this information is hidden so the reader has to spend hours hunting for it.

Issue #8 Groups of Trees Growing on Public Land are **NOT** Timber Stands and the Forest Service should Never Refer to them as this Again

First, I will say that I am very much offended when the Forest Service refers to the trees growing in the forest that I love so much as "timber stands."

This gives the reader a view inside the head of the Forest Service managers. That view tells them that these "managers" view these trees as nothing but an industrial commodity, being stored on the stump, waiting for their eventual logging.

Why do so many Forest Service employees have this view? Why do so many Forest Service employees believe that **every acre** of non-wilderness public land managed by the Forest is destined to be logged and hauled away at some point in the future?

On page II-9, Table II-2 of the DEIS a summary of the type and amount of activities proposed was presented. Both Map 2 and Map 7b display the proposed activities of the proposed action (Alternative B). The two maps divided the similar type of activities by each alternative: vegetation treatments and aquatic improvement with decommissioned roads. Combining these two maps would have been confusing. All maps were put into one place within the document for organizational and printing purposes.

The FEIS is organized in a similar manor. Each alternative has two sets of maps, presented after Chapter IV. Because of the amount and variety of proposed activities, Appendices C, E and H display the specifically proposed treatments in each alternative: by road number, by unit number, and/or by subwatershed.

The original legal notice is only a summary of the proposed action, and the DEIS provided a more detailed description of the proposed activities with each alternative. The description of the proposed activities has been expanded in the FEIS, see Section 2.3.3.

Each alternative was developed in response to comments on the proposed action (Alternative B). Therefore the amount of timber logging varies by alternative. See the discussion on alternatives considered in detail (Section 2.3.2 in the FEIS). Between the draft and final EIS an additional alternative was developed (Alternative E) in response to the water quality and fisheries issues.

More information was added to the FEIS in Section 2.3.3 Description of Proposed Activities, to clarify the proposed activities, amendments and project design/mitigation measures.

Response 3-11 Management, vegetation.

The term "timber stands" has been used in the silvicultural profession since its conception. It is used to describe a group of trees with similar characteristics that may or may not be managed for commodity production.

The forest plan defines which areas of the Nez Perce forest may be used for producing the commodity of timber. There are also areas defined not for production of a specific commodity.

Issue #9 The "Defensible Space" Alternative did not even make it to the List of Alternatives "Considered and Analyzed for Detailed Study." Why?

Of course this is a rhetorical question. If a non-commercial logging alternative were analyzed, considered, and met the P&N well, then the Forest Service may have a difficult time not choosing it. I very strongly believe that the real P&N for this project is to commercial log for political purposes using the worn-out excuse of fuels reduction. Everyone knows the large fires of the past several years were the result of drought.

Bush and the rest of the political lackeys behold to the timber industry are playing the fire issue to justify the increase in public land commercial harvest. Bush's Healthy Forest Initiative is a perfect example.

The real alternative that should be chosen was not even considered for detailed study in the EIS. That alternative is to "fireproof" communities and structures by using Dr. Jack Cohen's research. The DEIS does not even mention Cohen's research. Of course if your real goal is to get the cut out, Cohen's research which deals with removing grass, very small twigs, very small Christmas tree size trees, and brush within 200 feet of a house is irrelevant.

After reading the Red Pines DEIS I am embarrassed to even admit any connection to the Nez Perce forest.

Issue #10 I was Unable to find where you Displayed your Environmentally Preferable Alternative I looked in the index several times and could not find it. This is an EIS requirement. It should be listed in Chapter II, Description of Alternatives section.

I think the Environmentally Preferable Alternative should either be no-action or one of the alternatives that you so conveniently chose not to analyze.

Issue #11 The Forest Service Failed to Analyze a Reasonable Range of Alternatives in the Red Pines DEIS

I have quoted a section from the Code of Federal Regulations below.

40 CFR § 1500.2 - Policy

Federal agencies shall to the fullest extent possible:

- (e) Use the NEPA process to identify and assess the reasonable alternatives to proposed actions that will avoid or minimize adverse effects of these actions upon the quality of the human environment.

The defensible space alternative seems like a very reasonable alternative to any of the proposed action alternatives in the DEIS. There is no question that it "will avoid or minimize adverse effects of these actions upon the quality of the human environment."

Response 3-12 Fuels

The following is located in Chapter II under the section Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study (DEIS, Page II-6; FEIS Section 2.3.1.3)

Defensible Space: "While removing flammable forest fuels within 200 feet of structures has definite benefits with regard to reducing home ignitability, the purpose and need for this project is to position the landscape to reduce adverse environmental effects of any potential large severe wildfire. This project would also improve the safety and effectiveness of firefighter suppression activities throughout the watershed when fires do occur. Concentrating on fuel reduction only around structures would not achieve these objectives".

"This alternative would eliminate fuels in areas important for public safety, but would not meet the purpose and need to remove dead and dying trees contributing to fuel load, perform stand density reduction, nor would it reduce the ladder fuels that produce crown fires. Additionally, it does not maintain fire-resistant species in areas where understory is encroaching and does not allow for watershed improvement. Further, defensible space projects around some structures in the watershed are already being implemented."

The types of contracts that would be used to reduce forest fuel levels and implement restoration activities are described in Section 3.18, Socio-economics. Several types of contracts (timber sale, small sale, service) would be used to accomplish the proposed activities.

Response 3-13 Mgt

The comment is considered beyond the scope of the project because it is a policy question.

Response 3-14 Mgt / Fuels

Please see Responses 3-12, 3-22.

Response 3-15 Mgt.

In the FEIS the environmentally preferred alternative is disclosed on page II-6 in the FEIS, Alternative E (Section 2.3.2.5).

Response 3-16 Mgt

An adequate range of alternatives was considered that responds to the Purpose and Need of this project. (Refer to FEIS, Chapter 1). The proposed Alternatives B, C, D, and E provide a range of proposed activities. This range of alternatives was developed in response to issues identified through scoping, in response to the original proposed action. A new alternative, Alternative E, was developed in response to comments of the DEIS. The FEIS describes Alternative E and discloses the potential effects to each resource area. (Refer to FEIS, Chapters I and II).

A Defensible Space alternative was considered but not analyzed in detail because it would not be responsive to the Purpose and Need of this project (see Section 2.3.1.3, FEIS). While it is acknowledged that an efficient and effective method to protect structures is by conducting work within the home ignitability zone, structure protection is not the primary purpose and objective of this project. Additionally, the Red River Defensible Space project, which removed ladder fuels and surface fuels within 200 feet of private structures adjacent to Forest Service managed land, has already been completed around structures located within the Red River Drainage.

Failure to analyze a reasonable range of alternatives with the intent of biasing and predetermining the outcome is not looked on well by the courts. This is clearly the case with Red Pines. I can see it now. Someone associated with this EIS said:

"if we analyze and seriously consider the defensible space alternative, the analysis results may be so positive that we would be forced to select it. That would do nothing to satisfy our real, undisclosed Purpose and Need to commercially log the area (mostly by clearcut). By logging the area we will make Mark Rey, Larry Craig, and the Elk City residents happy, which is the real reason we are proposing so much logging with Red Pines."

If the P&N is to reduce the risk of wildfire to communities and structures, there is ample evidence in the literature showing that a defensible space alternative using methods from Cohen's research would achieve the goals of the project in a cost efficient manner without creating any of the ecological and economic damage of treatments that include commercial logging.

Issue #12 I Feel that some of the Ecological Conditions that the Red Pines Project are Supposed to Fix are Actually Beneficial to the Forest, yet this is never Recognized in the DEIS

The DEIS portrays insects, pathogens, and fire as all bad things for the forest. I beg to differ.

- forest birds will thrive on the increased insect population,
- pathogens will kill some trees that survived the fire, but when these trees fall, they will replenish the soil with needed organic matter.

The statements that the harvest will reduce ladder fuels and reduce the risk of high intensity fires, is straight out of the book of Forest Service cliches. When a manager really has no good reason for a harvest, they look to this book. When the ecology of a forest is right for it to burn, the ladder fuels help.

The DEIS clearly states that the project is intended to change the tree species that grow over a quite large area. The only reason given to change tree species given was related to fire severity. When the forest tree species is intentionally changed by man, much, much, much more changes than just the tree species. This includes the habitat for every living thing in the forest (both flora and fauna).

Response 3-17 Veg/Silv

Comment acknowledged. See Insect and Disease discussion, pp. III-140-142 of the DEIS. Also, refer to disturbance regime discussion (DEIS, pages III-123 and III-124.)

Response 3-18 Wildlife/Veg/Soils

Comment acknowledged. Stone (1995) indicates use of insects by birds is influenced by canopy cover and understory vegetation as well as insect abundance. This is summarized in the FEIS (section 3.12).

The cycle of pathogens and lethal fire, and cycling of snags to down wood is well understood. The purpose and need identify the need to maintain fire-resistant species and to reduce fuel loads that could contribute to locally severe burning effects. Additionally, the strategic location of fuel treatments might help fire managers contain fires at smaller size than otherwise. See Chapter III, Section 3.7.3. Areas where fuels would be modified would reduce fire intensity and severity, thus contributing to successful suppression activities. Treatments that modify fuel models 10 and 13 towards fuel models 1 and 8 would decrease the potential for fires that burn with higher intensities and severity with a high resistance to control, while increasing firefighter and public safety.

Response 3-19 Fuels

While it is acknowledged that ladder fuels help a forest to burn, and specifically transition a surface fire to a crown fire, please remember that we are trying to reduce the opportunity for a crown fire to occur. By reducing this risk we are able to mitigate the detrimental effects of a high intensity fire and better protect the resources located in the project area.

Response 3-20 Silviculture.

Fuel reduction activities associated with the Red Pines project would treat 6 percent or less of the Red Pines analysis area. Species composition in many stands in the Red Pines project area has already been altered, at least partly by fire suppression and past harvest (DEIS, page III-145). The fuel reduction treatments would result in tree species composition reflecting seral successional conditions consistent with inherent disturbance, because native fire-resistant species would be favored for retention, or reestablishment in areas where they have been removed in the past. No non-native tree species would be introduced into the project area.

When I looked in the DEIS for this discussion in the Wildlife Effects Section, I found it to either be missing or so biased, it was unacceptable.

My primary point is: The conditions and natural processes occurring in the Red Pines project area are positive and beneficial, yet the Forest Service is trying to stop them with this loony project.

If there are homes or entire communities at risk from wildfire, then apply the research of Jack Cohen. Mr. Cohen showed that work removing fine fuels within 200 feet of a structure is infinitely more effective against wildfire than the backcountry commercial logging that the Red Pines project is proposing.

Regardless of what the Purpose and Need for Red Pines says, I am confident that Red Pines is a timber sale dressed up as a fuels management project.

Issue #13 The Proposed Project Specific Forest Plan Amendments are a Serious Betrayal of the Contract with the Public called the Forest Plan

When the Plan was signed by the Regional Forester and finalized in 1985, the public thought he had just made a contract with them. Most contracts do not contain a clause that they can be broken at any time. The Red Pines Forest Plan amendments make a mockery of the Forest Plan standards and guides that the public thought would be followed regardless of the conditions. Adhering to these standards and guides is the basis for all Forest Plan effect analysis.

There is a separate standards and guides section in the Forest Plan. You should have prefaced the whole section with the statement:

"The following standards and guides are meant to reduce or eliminate adverse Forest Service project impacts on natural resources located on public lands. However, if these standards and guides interfere with "getting the cut out", a project specific amendment to the Forest Plan will be written and the standards and guides will not be followed."

Response 3-21 Wildlife

Each species/species group discussion includes an analysis of each alternative proposed in this project. A summary of the effects by analysis indicator by alternative is included in Section 3.12, FEIS. A Summary of Effect to Wildlife Species is included near the beginning of the wildlife section. Based on Stone (1995), canopy removal from insects or mechanical removal would result in similar affects to wildlife habitat. Considering fire as a predictable factor in a lodgepole dominated system, prescribed fire may cause similar results on a stand-by-stand basis. The proposed action is likely not to influence fire occurrence in Red River, and therefore, would be similar under all alternatives. Temporary road construction and human disturbance would be additional impacts to habitat under action alternatives. Temporary road construction would be mitigated because all temporary roads would be decommissioned. Additionally, up to 104 miles of existing roads would be decommissioned, thus improving wildlife habitat in Red River.

Response 3-22 Fuels

The Red River Ranger District has already implemented the work of Mr. Cohen during it's implementation of the Red River Defensible space project, which treated the fuels within 200 feet of structures adjacent to Forest Service lands. This work is meant to make structures more defensible as a last ditch effort during fire suppression.

The Red Pines project incorporates the spatial fragmentation work of Mark Finney to build outward from the structures located in the project area. This work isn't specifically intended to protect structures but is intended to address fuels and resulting fire behavior at a landscape level. By addressing these two issues we will be better able to prevent or reduce the detrimental fire effects that would result should a large high severity fire occur within the project area.

Additionally, due to the fact that there is currently no wildland fire use authority on the lands located within the project area, all new fire events require a suppression response and thus take away our ability to let nature do it's own thing. This project is being proactive in treating fuels and helping to bring back healthy new stands through forest management instead of wildland fire use.

Response 3-23 Forest plan amendments.

See Responses, 1-2 and 1-2a.

Response 3-24 Mgt

We disagree with this statement. See Responses 1-2 and 1-2a.

The First Forest Plan Amendment

The first amendment (Appendix D-1) would weaken soil standards so commercial logging could be done without violating the Forest Plan. Recent field analysis of the soils in the project area showed that they already violate Forest Plan standards because of past logging.

Rather than weaken the soil standards to allow **more** logging, this EIS should be trashed and replaced with an EIS that would analyze alternatives that would rehabilitate the soils that are already in poor shape.

The Second Forest Plan Amendment

The second amendment (Appendix D-2) would weaken watershed health guidelines (displayed in Appendix A of the Forest plan) so commercial logging could be done without violating the Forest Plan.

This amendment tragically would allow:

- more sediment in the streams,
- more timber project entries, and
- suspend the upward trend requirements in some watersheds located in the project area.

Rather than weaken the watershed standards to allow **more** logging, this EIS should be trashed and replaced with an EIS that would analyze alternatives that would rehabilitate watersheds that are already in poor shape.

Steve Williams, you are quoted on September 4, 2004 in the Lewiston Morning Tribune. You told Eric Barker: "It is a very sensitive watershed in terms of fish." If you really believe this, how can you sit by and watch the second amendment that weakens watershed standards remain in the Red Pines EIS?

You call yourselves land managers? Certain Nez Perce National Forest staff members should be ashamed of themselves for even contemplating these amendments to the Forest Plan!

Issue #14 What do you Mean when you say Red Pines is a "Really, Really Different Project"?

On the September 4, 2004, you were quoted by Eric Barker in the Lewiston Morning Tribune as saying : "This one is really, really a different project." Obviously the Red Pines project concerns you. It would only be fair to the public to explain what those concerns are. As it stands now there will be people wondering if this project is different because:

- it will be difficult to implement and achieve your fuels reduction goals,
- it will be difficult to implement and not cause undue harm to the ecosystem,
- it will be difficult to convince the public that Red Pines is a project the Forest Service should undertake.

Response 3-25 Soils

The amendment as described in Appendix D-1 would do two things: impose a stricter threshold of soil damage (the regional standard of 15 percent compared to the Forest Plan standard of 20 percent), but it would allow activities to proceed in areas that currently exceed that 15 percent standard, if, at the end of activities, an improving trend is established. We acknowledge that both of these are pretty hard to do in our soils with the proposed logging systems. We have addressed this in four ways. First, the soil design criteria and mitigation measures in Table II-3 and II-4 (FEIS) are strong and multifaceted to help protect soil physical, chemical, and biological function. Second, the soil monitoring (FEIS, Appendix I) required before, during, and after implementation will help identify where we need to change activities that are damaging soils, and where restoration is required so that, before we leave a unit, that unit must meet the standard of being below the 15 percent threshold, or improved from its prior condition. Third, additional soil restoration is required in neighboring areas that will start to address the backlog of soil damage that exists in the project area. Fourth, the roads scheduled to be recontoured and revegetated, will accelerate soil recovery on many acres. A restoration only project was considered and it is addressed in Chapter 1 (FEIS).

Response 3-26 Aquatics

See Responses 1-2 and 1-2a.

Note: If the EIS is ultimately rescinded, we would recommend recycling rather than trashing.

Response 3-27 Mgt/Fuels

The difference between the Red Pines project and other projects is the wide spread need to reduce fuels and the low values of the material need to be removed. These facts compiled with the sensitivity of the Red River watershed, it's value to the threatened and endangered fish species it make this a very difficult and different project. I believe we have weighed these factors and we have put together alternatives that show differences in the extent of fuel reductions as well as what it would take to achieve a long term positive benefit for threatened and endangered fish. I hope when you read the final EIS you can see that we have carefully weighed these values and included an explanation of the effects of various alternatives.

There is one thing I want to say to you. You are the Forest Supervisor. Any decision is retrievable up to the time the decision document is signed. This includes those projects that have been made public.

Once again, you are the Supervisor. If you don't like a project and there is still time to pull it, then pull it! All it takes is an article in the newspaper telling the public owners of this land what you intend to do and why.

Conclusion

If after reading my comments, you think they are written in an angry tone, you would be correct. I am a partial owner of these public lands. I refuse to sit by and watch as you harm what I own and love. Why are you doing this?

All through these comments I have eluded to political reasons. At first I thought the reason you were proposing to commercially log such a large area was to help you make your timber target. Doing this for political reasons is worse.

I am now convinced that you are proposing this project to make goons like Mark Rey and Larry Craig happy. I also think that you know there are politically connected residents from Elk City who will be happy if this project is implemented.

Everything I read in this DEIS shows me that the Red Pines project should have never made it this far. Better and more caring minds would have done the right thing and dropped the project when the adverse environmental effects became clear.

There is still time to avert the destruction. I ask you to save me some time. It will take time to write my slam-dunk appeal. Please drop the Red Pines project and instead, begin the NEPA for project alternatives that would restore some of the natural resources (soils, fish habitat, and water quality) of the area without a timber sale.

As far as the fire danger goes, you could implement Cohen's ideas. You could hold public meeting in Elk City to

I am very, very, very much opposed to clearcutting 4 square miles in this important watershed based on such flimsy justification.

Sincerely,
Richard Artley
Richard Artley
415 East North 2nd
Grangeville, Idaho 83530
(208)-983-0181

CC: Steve Williams, Nez Perce Forest Supervisor swilliams@fs.fed.us
Terry Nevius, Red River District Ranger tnevius@fs.fed.us

Response 3-28 Mgt
Please see response 3-27.

Response 3-29. Restoration only alternative.

A restoration only alternative was considered but not analyzed in detail because it would not be responsive to the Purpose and Need of this project. (Refer to FEIS, Chapter I, Section 2.3.1).